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Turtle Excluder Device (TED) Technology Transfer to Latin American Shrimp Fisheries

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Beginning on 21 November 1989, efforts by the United States Government to protect sea turtles were formally extended beyond its national borders. On that date, federal legislation (Public Law 101-162; see [MTN 48:31](#)) was implemented which prohibits the importation of shrimp harvested by countries that do not have sea turtle conservation measures in their shrimp fishery comparable to those of the U. S.

Affected foreign nations will be allowed a three year phase-in period in which to develop and implement appropriate sea turtle conservation programs. Although not required by the new federal regulations, the Turtle Excluder Device (TED) may be the best way for many of the countries to comply with the law. In an effort to provide the necessary training in TED technology to the affected countries, the U. S. Department of State's Agency for International Development (AID), in association with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), has provided a mechanism for countries to request in-country TED training workshops for their shrimp fishermen. Credited with the development of the TED in the U. S., the Harvesting Systems Branch of the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Mississippi Laboratories, is providing a team of gear specialists to conduct the in-country TED training sessions.

To date, three in-country TED training sessions have been conducted in Latin America. In February 1991, government officials and industry representatives from 11 Central and South American countries participated in a four-day TED conference held in Panama City, Panama. The purpose of the conference was to present the overall strategy of the U. S. legislation, as well as to provide technical information on the use of TEDs in commercial shrimp trawl fisheries. A demonstration of TED operation at sea was conducted for conference participants aboard a Panamanian shrimp vessel. The countries represented at the Panama conference were Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, and French Guiana. The workshop was conducted by sea turtle experts and TED specialists from NMFS, as well as a representative of the U. S. State Department. Workshop participants learned that in-country TED training is now available, and requests for training must be initiated by each country through their respective U. S. State Department AID mission.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the in-country TED training sessions, foreign governments are urged to have shrimping industry representatives, vessel captains, and shrimp trawl builders attend. Training begins with a series of presentations which include the history of TED development, TED design and performance, and TED trouble-shooting. The presentations are accompanied by underwater videos which display TEDs at work. A majority of the workshop schedule is devoted to "hands-on" instruction in TED construction, installation and operation at sea. The NMFS has selected three TED designs for workshop instruction. These designs were chosen based on their proven effectiveness in excluding sea turtles (97% effective as required by U. S. regulations) and their successful use in the U. S. shrimp fishery in regard to shrimp retention and ease of operation.

Although not represented at the Panama workshop, the Mexican government has initiated a TED evaluation program through the cooperative Mexico/U. S. scientific marine research program, MEXUS-GULF. The first TED workshop in Mexico was held in Tampico, Tamaulipas, in October 1990. A second workshop was held on the west coast at Guaymas, Sonora, in April 1991. The Mexican TED workshops resulted in a total of 24 government fishery technicians and gear specialists receiving extensive training in TED technology, and a total of 43 TEDs were constructed during these workshops. Finally, at the request of the shrimping industry in Honduras, a TED workshop was held in that country in June 1991 on the Caribbean island of Roatan. Fleet owners, captains, and net builders attended presentations and observed a TED construction demonstration. During the week-long workshop, NMFS TED specialists worked with island net builders on the construction, installation, and repair of TEDs. A one day at-sea demonstration of TED operation was attended by vessel captains of the Roatan shrimp fleet. At the conclusion of the Roatan training session, fleet owners and vessel captains were less apprehensive about TEDs and felt that the TED designs demonstrated may not be as adverse to their shrimping operations as anticipated. Roatan fleet owners are expected to conduct TED evaluations during the 1991 shrimp season.

During 1992, NMFS anticipates in-country TED training sessions will be scheduled for Colombia, Venezuela, and El Salvador. These training requests, as well as the successful training completed in Mexico and Honduras, are encouraging indicators of preliminary compliance with U. S. sea turtle conservation legislation. It is hoped the positive results of these initial TED training workshops will be spread among the governments and shrimp fleets of Latin America, thereby allowing additional TED technology workshops to take place throughout the region.